Services covering various geographical areas using any technology;

(ii) Licence for Unified Access (Basic and Cellular) Services permitting Licensee to provide Basic and/or Cellular Services using any technology in a defined service area.

The Government has not approved hike in FDI in Basic and Cellular Services from 49 to 74%.

(b) and (c) Given the central aim of NTP-99 to ensure rapid expansion of tele-density, Government in the public interest in general and consumer interest in particular and for the proper conduct of telegraphs and telecommunications services, has decided to move towards Unified Licensing Regime. Introduction of the said regime will ensure more competition and provide flexibility to the service providers to make use of latest technologies in the most efficient manner for providing access to the subscriber at cheaper rates. It will also ensure rapid expansion of tele-density allowing operators to provide different services under the same licence by availing benefit of rapid advances that are taking place in the telecom technologies.

Reduction in call timings

1712. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether local call has been reduced to 90 seconds and that of calling mobile number to 60 seconds; if so, what is the basis for such a step, which has affected everyone, especially poor people; and

(b) whether Government would reverse its decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN); (a) and (b) As per section 11 (2) of TRAI Act 1997, the power to fix telecom tariffs has been mandated to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) only and Government has no role in the matter. *Vide* its 28th Amendment to the Telecommunication Tariff Order, notified on 5.11.2003. TRAI has forborne on prescription of any pulse rate for

local calls and Service Providers are free to decide the pulse rate for different types of calls. Both Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited have not reduced the local call duration and have kept it as 180 seconds for local calls from landline to landline. However, taking into account the Interconnection Usage Charges (IUC), the pulse rate from landline to WLL (Mobile) has been kept as 90 seconds and Cellular mobile as 60 seconds.

Postal Facilities in Himachai Pradesh

†1713. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Gram Panchayats in Himachai Pradesh are devoid of post offices;

(b) if so, the number thereof; and

(c) by when Government plan to set up post offices in these Gram Panchayats?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There are 626 Gram Panchayats in Himachai Pradesh without Post Offices.

(c) Post Offices are opened subject to fulfillment of distance, population and income norms and availability of resources and targets under Plan. Hence no time limit can be specified for setting up post offices in these panchayats.

Telephones in Gram Sabhas

1714. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Gram Sabhas in the country where telephones are functioning and the number of Gram Sabhas which have applied for the telephones, State-wise;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.